

*Living in a Marginal Environment:
Rural Habitat and Landscape in Southeastern Isauria*

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ASIA MINOR IS ONE of the most intensively and longest studied regions of the Mediterranean world. Yet the prioritization of certain periods, sites, and types of data has resulted in an imbalance between the quantity and quality of the evidence. Because archaeology in Asia Minor has been traditionally dominated by investigations of major cities, monumental structures, and ecclesiastical buildings, a vast quantity of information has been acquired on urban settlements. On the other hand, the study of the countryside has almost always been initiated as an extension of an excavation project at an urban center; in other words, the rural hinterland of cities has rarely become the focus of archaeological investigations. This historiographical aspect does not characterize solely the scholarship on Asia Minor. However, the shift of interest to the countryside and everyday life, accompanied by the development of new methods in the study of landscapes, has fundamentally transformed scholarly research on Italy, Greece, North Africa, and the Levant.¹

The theory and methods of the holistic landscape perspective developed by multi-disciplinary projects have remained at the forefront of survey archaeology for more than a decade.² Yet they have affected archaeological research in Asia Minor only minimally. As a result, the practice of archaeology in Asia Minor largely lags behind the current state of scholarship; therefore it has contributed only marginally to the current debates on the definitions, interpretation,

1 Some of the most noteworthy projects in these regions are the following: for Italy, see G. Barker, R. Hodges, and G. Clark, *A Mediterranean Valley: Landscape Archaeology and Annals History in the Biferno Valley* (London, 1995); for North Africa, see G. Barker et al., *Farming the Desert: The UNESCO Libyan Valleys Archaeological Survey*, 2 vols. (Paris and Tripoli, 1996); for Greece and the Aegean islands, see W. G. Cavanagh et al., *The Laconia Survey: Continuity and Change in a Greek Rural Landscape*, 2 vols. (London, 1996–2002), and J. F. Cherry, J. L. Davis, and H. Mantzourani, *Landscape Archaeology as Long-Term History: Northern Keos in the Cycladic Islands from Earliest Settlement until Modern Times* (Los Angeles, 1991); for Cyprus, see M. L. Rautman, M. C.

McClellan, and L. Benson, *A Cypriot Village of Late Antiquity: Kalavassos-Kopetra in the Vasilikos Valley* (Portsmouth, 2003), and M. Given and A. B. Knapp, *The Sydney Cyprus Survey Project: Social Approaches to Regional Archaeological Survey* (Los Angeles, 2003); for Syria, see G. Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du nord du II^e au VII^e siècle: Un exemple d'expansion démographique et économique dans les campagnes à la fin de l'antiquité* (Paris, 1992); and for Judeo-Palestine, see Y. Tsafir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green, *Tabula Imperii Romani. Iudaea, Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods: Maps and Gazetteer* (Jerusalem, 1994).

2 Discussions on the theory and methods of landscape archaeology and their application to fieldwork have been exten-

sively published in the recent past. See W. Ashmore and A. B. Knapp, eds., *Archaeologies of Landscape: Contemporary Perspectives* (Malden, Mass., 1999); E.-F. Athanassopoulos and L. Wandsnider, eds., *Mediterranean Archaeological Landscapes: Current Issues* (Philadelphia, 2004); J. K. Papadopoulos and R. M. Leventhal, eds., *Theory and Practice in Mediterranean Archaeology: Old World and New World Perspectives* (Los Angeles, 2003); and G. Barker and D. Mattingly, eds., *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Landscapes* (Oxford, 2000), vols. 1–5. The last to be mentioned but not the least is P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000).

and study of historical landscapes. In the past decade, the incorporation of excavations and surveys in the territory of Anatolian cities has become more the norm than the exception.³ Nevertheless, the countryside is still understudied; furthermore, it is interpreted from a city-oriented viewpoint, based on the controversial model of the core and the periphery.⁴ Compared to data on urban landscapes, the quantity of information available on the rural countryside of Asia Minor is extremely small; hence we have a very limited understanding of its character. Our knowledge becomes even more sporadic for the post-Classical period for which preconceived models of decline and fall have been traditionally accepted without scrutiny.

Obviously this deficiency in Anatolian archaeology can only be rectified with new projects in uninvestigated territories. More important, there is an urgent need for the application and development of new methods, as well as the reinterpretation of traditional paradigms in the light of new data. This gap in the field of the late antique settlement history of Asia Minor stimulated the current archaeological project on the rural landscapes of southeastern Isauria, a region and subject that have so far received very limited scholarly attention. With the larger scope of studying the role of the Anatolian rural countryside in the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages, in 2003 I launched a reconnaissance survey to explore the character of land use, building practices, and rural settlement patterns. The survey area is a densely settled micro-ecology encompassing the coastal plains and the marginal limestone hills overlooking the Mediterranean. The network of settlements and traces of the exploitation of a large territory provide ample evidence for the study of the countryside as an integral component of late antique social, economic, military, administrative, and religious structures. While earlier archaeological investigations focused on the cities and monumental churches of the region, rural settlements were neither mapped nor fully documented.⁵ In addition the lack of written attestations about the countryside seems to have rendered these settlements almost invisible.

3 Regional aspects of the Anatolian countryside are presented in the following volumes based on recent archaeological investigations: H. Vanhaverbeke and M. Waelkens, *The Chora of Sagalassos: The Evolution of the Settlement Pattern from Prehistoric until Recent Times* (Turnhout, 2003); R. E. Blanton, *Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Settlement Patterns of the Coast Lands of Western Rough Cilicia* (Oxford, 2000); and O. P. Doonan, *Sinop Landscapes: Exploring Connection in a Black Sea Hinterland* (Philadelphia, 2004).

4 The core-periphery model assumes that the core is more advanced than the periphery, and it divides the territory into neatly delimited zones, i.e., the core and its periphery separated by a buffer zone. See J. Bintliff, "Regional Survey, Demography, and the Rise of Complex Societies in the Ancient Aegean: Core-Periphery, Neo-Malthusian, and Other Interpretive Models," *JFA* 24.1 (1997): 17–22.

5 E. Herzfeld and S. Guyer, *Meriamlik und Korykos. Zwei christliche Ruinenstätten des Rauhen Kilikiens*, MAMA 2 (Manchester, 1930); J. Keil and A. Wilhelm, *Denkmäler aus dem Rauhen Kilikien*, MAMA 3 (Manchester, 1931); and S. Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches of Cilicia and Isauria* (Aldershot, 1996).

The extensive remains suggest that the countryside cannot be interpreted as a mere hinterland supplying the urban centers; to the contrary, it was a lively and prosperous hub of activity on its own. From a methodological point of view, binary opposites such as the core and the periphery, settled versus nomad, and site versus empty spaces do not suffice to explain the complexity of this rural countryside. Instead the term *landscape*, which is distinct from and by far more comprehensive than the term *territory*, provides a holistic yet flexible framework for the study of the evidence of diverse character, various time-scales, and different localities. In my usage, landscapes are palimpsests of social, religious, economic, and administrative networks, which interact with diverse components of the territory whether material or conceptual. In other words, landscape is an agent in the formation of the cultural record and is reciprocally affected by human agency as well as by long-term ecological and geological changes. While accommodating the processes that induced the restructuring of economic, religious, social, and cultural systems during late antiquity, this theoretical framework proposes an alternative and more complex interpretation of the urban and the rural, not as disconnected and clearly delimited categories, but as interacting and adaptive components of a system.

The exploitation and occupation of marginal zones during the late Roman period is a common phenomenon in the Mediterranean. The settlements of rural Isauria fit in this category of densely settled countryside, typical of the hinterlands of major cities and harbors such as Antioch on the Orontes River and Apamea.⁶ However, this apparent similarity should not lead to the simplistic conclusion that such rural settlements went through the same processes of transformation in the face of the new circumstances at the end of antiquity. To the contrary, regional peculiarities, whether natural or man-made, are key to understanding the complexity of the period. One major difference is that Egypt and the Levant were occupied by Arab armies while the region under study was not. The transformation of cities and rural settlements under Islamic rule has been relatively well studied, unlike the territories that remained under Byzantine rule. The understanding of the nature of this change requires a significant sample of regional studies from various parts of the Eastern Mediterranean.

In this paper I do not claim to offer definitive answers to the big question of the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages.⁷ Instead I present the preliminary results of three seasons of reconnaissance and mapping survey carried out between 2003 and 2005. The extensive reconnaissance survey recorded topographical and man-made features of the area under study; in other words it identified and recorded sites of high visibility, communication networks, surface pottery, soil characteristics, and modern land usage. The remains, of all sizes and

6 See C. Foss, "Syria in Transition, A.D. 550–750: An Archaeological Approach," *DOP* 51 (1997): 189–269.

7 The issues presented in this paper are discussed in further detail in my dissertation entitled "The Rural Landscape and Built Environment at the End of Antiquity: Limestone Villages of Southeastern Isauria," which will be completed in August 2008 under the supervision of Cecil Lee Striker at the University of Pennsylvania.

types—whether an isolated tomb, a cistern, a farm, an agricultural field, pottery scatter, or a settlement—are recorded in such a way as to form the basis of a future Geographical Information Systems (GIS) project. On the other hand, the mapping survey was geared to two large settlements only 1 km apart, namely Işıkkale and Karakabaklı, known only through their Turkish names. This survey used a combination of mapping and remote-sensing technologies, such as high-accuracy Global Positioning System (GPS), Total Station, Computer Aided Design (CAD), and low-level aerial photography.⁸ The conclusions and hypotheses presented in this paper are provisional and will be further investigated in future seasons.

Isaurian Landscapes

The late antique province of Isauria is more commonly referred to in the scholarship as Rough Cilicia, and is known in modern Turkish as Taşeli, that is, “the land of rocks.” As its Turkish nomenclature suggests, the region is characterized by its rugged limestone topography, impenetrable brushwood, occasional and thin red soil (*terra rossa*), and its lack of water. This is mountainous country with limited access from the Anatolian plateau, yet tightly connected to Mediterranean maritime networks by means of small, well-protected harbors. The province was overshadowed by eastern Cilicia (Cilicia of the Plain), which possessed a large fertile plain (modern Çukurova) fed by major rivers.⁹

⁸ During the first season in 2003, with the help of a small team, I gathered the necessary data for the preparation of settlement plans and documented the physical features of the landscape in the form of drawings, digital photographs, and written notes. The mapping survey was carried out only during the first season. The settlement of Işıkkale has been fully mapped, while Karakabaklı could only be partially studied. Therefore the settlement plan of Karakabaklı was drawn using aerial photographs, a limited number of Total Station and GPS coordinates, and field observations. The procedure of aerial photography drastically reduced time spent for mapping. Since our budget did not allow for the purchase of professional balloon photography equipment or the rental of a helicopter, we designed and manufactured a system consisting of a point-and-shoot camera whose shutter release would be controlled by a remote control used for model airplanes (designed and manufactured by Şafak Şenveli, Murat Çavdar, and Gündür Varinlioğlu). We

attached this very light system (about 500 g) to three latex balloons (40–60 inches in diameter) inflated with helium. Thus we have taken hundreds of overlapping pictures for each settlement. By joining these digitally, I have acquired a “settlement picture” from which I produced sketch plans of the sites. In addition, by geo-rectifying the air photographs I acquired low-accuracy base maps to study the layout of settlements that we did not have time to map.

⁹ Diocletian further strengthened this physical separation by merging the western part of Cilicia (Rough Cilicia) with the territories in the Taurus Mountains and created the new province of Isauria, administered from Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos River. In 370 Valens attached the former Isaurian homeland in the Taurus mountains (centered at the dipolis of Isaura) to the province of Lykaonia. The province of Isauria was hence reduced to the western part of Cilicia, commonly referred to as Rough Cilicia. Hierocles’ fifth-century list of cities and governmental units records the

provinces of Isauria (metropolis Seleukeia), Kilikia I (metropolis Tarsos), and Kilikia II (metropolis Anazarbos). See E. Honigmann, ed., *Le synekdèmos d’Hiéroklès et l’opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre: Texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes* (Brussels, 1939), 37–39. Isauria as an entity became part of the *Anatolikon* theme in the seventh century; subsequently Theophilos turned it into a *kleisoura* named Seleukeia. Under Romanos I Lekapenos in 930, it became a separate theme centered around Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos. Throughout its Christian history (except for a short period during the Arab occupation of Antioch), the whole region was under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Antioch. For a more detailed discussion of the administrative status of the region, see T. B. Mitford, “Roman Rough Cilicia,” *ANRW* 2.7.2 (1980): 1230–58; and F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien* (Vienna, 1990), 1: 30–84.



Fig. 1 Map of the area covered in the project based on the map “Seleukeia und Umgebung” in F. Hild and H. Hellenkemper, *Kilikien und Isaurien* (Vienna, 1990).

Isauria is fragmented by deep river valleys, which separate and connect several micro-ecologies.¹⁰ The area treated in this paper lies between two of these (fig. 1): the Kalykadnos and Yenibahçe ravines. In the west the Kalykadnos River (modern Göksu), navigable in the Roman period, created an irrigated, large, and fertile alluvial delta.¹¹ This delta is the only large coastal plain in Isauria and, though much smaller, it is comparable to the Çukurova plain in its climate and soil characteristics. The city of Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos River (modern Silifke), the administrative and later the ecclesiastical capital, was located on the western bank of the Kalykadnos about 10 km from the coast. About 12

10 The territory discussed in this paper lies at the southeastern corner of Isauria, along its border with Kilikia I. This liminal setting creates a controversy regarding the appropriate administrative designation that should be used to refer to this region. In the absence of relevant textual and epigraphic evidence, we cannot determine with certainty whether this territory belonged administratively to Isauria or Kilikia I. Geographically and topographically, it is more directly connected to Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos and Diokaisareia, cities in the province of Isauria. Therefore I believe that it is more appropriate to refer to this region as part of southeastern Isauria rather than western Kilikia I.

11 Strabo, *Geography* 14.5.4; and Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History* 14.2.19.

km to the east another deep ravine was formed by the seasonal stream of Yenibahçe (also known as Persenti or Perşembe), which reached the Mediterranean close to the harbor of Korasion (modern Susanoğlu), a settlement whose re-foundation is epigraphically dated to 367–375.¹²

The area under study consists of two zones distinguished by their climate, annual rainfall, vegetation, and soil properties. The alluvial Kalykadnos valley, its delta, and the narrow coastal plains belong to the Mediterranean temperate sub-humid climate and receive 700–900 mm of rainfall per year. On the other hand, the limestone hills at an altitude of about 300–1000 m are semi-arid and receive only 400–700 mm of rainfall per year. Today, evergreen broad-leaved scrubs similar to the Mediterranean maquis cover the limestone bedrock. This vegetation is interspersed by dry yet arable fields of usually small dimensions, which are suitable for dry farming, such as the cultivation of olives, vines, and grains.¹³ Other subsistence strategies included pastoralism, the exploitation of trees (oak, juniper, cedar, and pine at high altitudes), forest products, and native plants such as saffron.¹⁴ On the pockets of *terra rossa* soil carob, daphne (laurel), pistachio, and wild olive trees grow naturally between 200 and 600 m above sea level, and wheat, oats, and barley are regularly cultivated by villagers.¹⁵

Due to the absence of water sources, limited rainfall, and the dearth of cultivable soil, the limestone hills rising above the narrow coastal plains can be qualified as marginal in terms of their topography, climate, and agricultural potential. Yet this rural territory was by no means isolated. It was connected to the larger Mediterranean networks of commerce, transportation, and pilgrimage through the cities and harbors along the coast, as well as inland cities along the routes leading to the Anatolian plateau. The most important center of population was Seleukeia on the Kalykadnos River, due to the diversity of institutions it

12 An inscription on the fortifications (lost by the early twentieth century) dates the construction of the walls to the reigns of Valentinian I, Valens, and Gratian (367–375). This date is considered to be a terminus post quem for the settlement, which is described as desolate and uninhabited in the inscription. As Korasion does not appear in Hierokles' *Synekdemos*, we may conclude that it did not reach the status of city by the fifth century. See CIG 3.4430; and Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, 102.

13 The area under the jurisdiction of the modern district (*ilçe*) of Silifke is 266,000 ha large. Of this territory, 54% is covered by forests, 25% is used for agriculture (77% of

this being devoted to dry-farming), 12% for pasture, and 12% is occupied by settlements and wasteland. For a detailed explanation of the statistical data, see the report of the *Silifke Tarım İlçe Müdürlüğü* (the Directorate of Agriculture of the Silifke District) at <http://www.silifketarim.gov.tr/tarimsalyapi.asp>. The two lakes in the Kalykadnos delta are breeding grounds for varieties of fish. The delta is also an important stop on the migration routes of various bird species. Further information on the delta can be found at <http://www.silifke.org/genel/delta.htm>; and M. Bener, "Göksu Deltası," *İstanbul Üniversitesi Coğrafya Enstitüsü Dergisi* 16 (1967): 86–100.

14 The caves and hills above Korykos were renowned for the highest quality saffron: Pliny, *NH*, 21.17; and Strabo 14.670. There is no more saffron in the area today and the inhabitants do not recognize the plant.

15 For a detailed study of the vegetation, see H. Kürschner, *Der östliche Orta Toroslar (Mittlerer Taurus) und angrenzende Gebiete: Eine formationskundliche Darstellung der Vegetation südost-Anatoliens Ost Taurus* (Wiesbaden, 1984), 134–35. Cedar and juniper were in great demand in antiquity for both architectural and maritime construction. See S. Hill, *The Early Byzantine Churches of Cilicia and Isauria* (Aldershot, 1996), 5.

encompassed (administrative, commercial, ecclesiastical, and military). In the *Life and Miracles of St. Thekla* composed in the fifth century, Seleukeia is described as on a par with Tarsos: “An admirable and exceedingly gracious city having such magnitude in accordance with commensurability that she does not fall short of charm. She has such splendor and elegance that she surpasses most cities, equals others, and rivals the beautiful Tarsos in terms of boundaries, setting, the good climate, the abundance in produce, the flow of merchandises, the utility of waters, the pleasantness, hence the brilliance of baths, the beautiful language of the Muses, the joyousness of people, the eloquence of rhetoricians, and the glory of the military.”¹⁶

The presence of the regional capital was of the utmost importance for the prosperity of this territory. On the other hand, although it was the administrative and ecclesiastical center of the province, Seleukeia was peripheral at the macroregional level. It lay at the crossroads of secondary roads originating in the Anatolian plateau, while the main route connecting Europe to Asia through Asia Minor passed by the Cilician Gates farther east. Located near the southernmost tip of the landmass of Anatolia, it was a convenient stop for ships traveling in the eastern Mediterranean. This advantage was limited, however, by Cyprus, located only 45 km from the mainland coast, and often preferred as a stopping point due to the island’s rich mineral and agricultural resources and its harbor facilities. Nevertheless, Seleukeia attracted visitors from all over the Christian world, because of its physical connection with the pilgrimage site of Saint Thekla, only 1.5 km south of the city. Her cult was especially widespread in Egypt, where she was associated with Saint Menas. The extent of pilgrimage activity beyond the seventh century cannot be extrapolated from the evidence; however, Saint Thekla continued to be revered in Seleukeia until the fourteenth century.¹⁷ Neither the pilgrimage activity nor its impact on the *chora* has been studied in detail. Unfortunately the account of the life and miracles of Saint Thekla does not provide much information about the rural countryside and its relationship with Seleukeia. Nevertheless, the impact of pilgrimage on local commerce, especially

16 Translation by the author based on the edition of G. Dagon, *Vie et miracles de Sainte Thècle, texte grec, traduction et commentaire* (Brussels, 1978), 276–79.

17 St. Thekla, revered as St. Paul’s companion, was the first female martyr honored as an apostle. Her martyrdom was connected to Seleucia by a paved road partially cut into the hill. St. Thekla paired

with Menas appears on fifth- and sixth-century pilgrim flasks from the pilgrimage-site of St. Menas near Abū Mīnā in Egypt. The Miracles of St. Menas mention the presence of a St. Thekla martyrdom near the St. Menas site, but there is so far no archaeological evidence for the existence of such a shrine. The existence of the St. Thekla cult in the fourteenth century is based on the

evidence about a relic of the saint sent by the Armenian ruler of Seleucia to King James II of Aragon. See Hild and Hellenkemper, *Kilikien*, 441 (above, n. 9). For a comprehensive discussion of the St. Thekla cult, see S. J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thekla: A Tradition of Women’s Piety in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2001).

during the saint's annual panegyris at the time of her feast day on 24 September, was considerable.¹⁸

Seleukeia and the pilgrimage site of Saint Thekla were connected to the maritime networks of the Mediterranean through a small harbor at Holmoi, 8 km southwest of Seleukeia. This was the official port of the capital for pilgrims, travelers, and tradesmen. Today Holmoi is completely covered by the modern town of Taşucu, which is still the main port of departure for ships between Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The harbor and the adjoining settlement were certainly very active throughout late antiquity. The rich epigraphical evidence from the harbor city of Korykos (modern Kızkalesi) in Kilikia I, about 25 km northeast of Seleukeia, provides glimpses of the economy of such a regional center of commerce. Funerary inscriptions dating from the fifth to the seventh centuries testify to the rich commercial life, represented by a large variety of professions, ranging from food business (e.g., sellers of wine, olive oil, bread, and groceries), to textile manufacturing and retail (e.g., wool, flax, sacks, sails), skin processing (e.g., shoemakers), and harbor activities (e.g., ship owners and sailors).¹⁹

Similar crafts and commercial activities are also attested at Korasion, located between Seleukeia and Korykos. Because this secondary harbor settlement is located a few km east of the mouth of the Yenibahçe ravine, its functions and history are directly connected to the rural countryside under study, which lay in its immediate hinterland. Here, too, funerary inscriptions of the fifth to the seventh centuries record several professionals such as a seller of warm drinks, barber, physician, jeweler, baker, shoemaker, ship owner, public-house keeper, potter, and oil seller. Others attest to the close ties of Korasion with the neighboring port of Korykos by means of regular messengers. It is difficult to say whether the foundation of Korasion was a response to the need for a nearby port and commercial center for the increasing number of settlements in the countryside, or, alternatively, whether its foundation turned the marginal limestone hills into lucrative areas for agro-pastoral exploitation. Unfortunately the modern resort town of Susanoğlu has substantially obliterated the ancient

18 In a miracle, St. Thekla helps an ugly woman regain her beauty by advising her to purchase the miraculous soaps sold at the gates of the church of St. Thekla, soak them in wine, and wash her face with the mixture. See miracle no. 42 in Dagron, *Vie et Miracles*, 400–3. Today, soaps made with laurel oil are a local specialty.

19 The most updated collection of inscriptions from western Cilicia can be found in S. Hagel and K. Tomaschitz, *Repertorium des westkilikischen Inschriften*, ETAM 22 (Vienna, 1998). Also see Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, 102–213. For a discussion of the economy of Korykos based on epigraphic evidence, see E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté*

économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e–7e siècles (Paris, 1977), 156–81; and F. Trombley, “Korykos in Cilicia Trachis: The Economy of a Small Coastal City in Late Antiquity (Saec. V–VI)—A Précis,” *Ancient History Bulletin* 1/1 (1987): 16–23.

settlement, which was in a much better state of preservation in the early twentieth century.²⁰

Crafts and trades were not restricted to the harbors along the Mediterranean coast. The cities located in the foothills of the Taurus Mountains were certainly in close contact with the rural population. Two of these, Diokaisareia (modern Uzuncaburç) and Olba (modern Ura), located inland on a plateau at an altitude of about 1000–1200 m, were only 4 km apart from each other, yet they were two distinct cities already by the fifth century. The epigraphic record of Diokaisareia, a bishopric by the end of the fourth century, mentions local craftsmen and tradesmen such as cook, mule seller, falconer, carpenter, shoemaker, painter, marble worker, and building master.²¹

Isaurians were closely connected to the larger world of the eastern Mediterranean not only through pilgrimage and commerce, but also by exporting skilled labor. In the late fifth and early sixth centuries, they were renowned as constructional workers and master builders, in such major architectural projects as the lavra of Saint Sabas in Palestine dedicated in 501, the monastery of Saint Symeon the Younger on the “Wondrous Mountain” near Antioch on the Orontes built between 541 and 551, and the rebuilding of the dome of St. Sophia in Constantinople in 558.²² Apart from the Isaurians from the village of Kouvramon in the territory of Seleukeia mentioned in the Life of Saint Symeon the Younger, we do not know which part of Isauria the workers came from or precisely what the term *Isaurian* referred to. Nevertheless, this text suggests the continuous flow of Isaurian workers and workshops engaged in quarrying, construction, and stone cutting, as well as in the capacity of master builders, that is, what might correspond to design and structural engineering. It seems that Isaurian builders were recruited in many building projects at least in the territory of Antioch, if not in a wider area.²³

The prominent position of building trades in Isauria itself is evident in the funerary inscriptions of the extensive cemetery of Korykos. Among the 456 inscriptions dating from the fifth to the seventh

20 Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, 102–17.

21 Olba became a city by the first century BCE at the latest and retained its status until at least the very end of the seventh century CE. Olba was the main center of the Hellenistic Olban kingdom ruled by the priests of the Zeus temple in Diokaisareia under Seleucid control in the third century BCE. See T. S. MacKay, “Olba in Rough Cilicia” (PhD diss., Bryn Mawr College, 1968). Diokaisareia was represented at the councils of Constantinople in 381, 680–81,

and 692 and at Nicaea in 787; see Hild and Hellenkemper, *Kilikien*, 239 (above, n. 9).

22 C. Mango, “Isaurian Builders,” in *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. P. Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), 358–65.

23 Isaurians’ presence is also attested at a location known as Apate near Antioch on the Orontes. See P. van den Ven, *La vie ancienne de St. Syméon Stylite le Jeune* (521–92) (Brussels, 1970), 2: 192.1. Later in the sixth century, Prokopios mentions Isaurians

among Belisarius’s soldiers in Italy, who this time were involved in destroying structures: see Procopius, *The Gothic War* 5.9.11–22 and 6.27.5. I agree with Hugh Elton’s argument that destruction required some kind of knowledge of structural behavior. For a discussion of the term *Isaurian*, see H. Elton, “The Nature of the Sixth-century Isaurians,” in *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, ed. S. Mitchell and G. Greatrex (London and Oakville, 2001), 293–307.

centuries, about 6 percent belong to craftsmen in the construction business, such as marble cutters, sculptors, carpenters, tile-makers, quarrying experts, construction workers, and providers of straw, as well as contractors, surveyors, and architects.²⁴ This evidence shows that men involved with construction activities could afford inscribed stone sarcophagi in the necropolis of the city, and that they occupied the upper echelons of the society. Cyril Mango argues that the sixth-century flux of Isaurian workers to construction projects in the eastern Mediterranean is a direct result of the turmoil in Isauria due to the civil war between Isaurian bandits and Roman troops in the late fifth century.²⁵ However, the prosperity of the settlements in the region which were clearly engaged in large-scale architectural construction during in this period does not support the picture of regional distress presented by the written sources. The presence of Isaurian seasonal workers does not seem to indicate economic and political difficulties at home. To the contrary, this “offshore” construction business, probably already active in the fifth century, may help to explain the wealth of the building craftsmen in Isauria. We do not know whether certain cities, villages, or regions had specialized in construction. The surviving stone-built structures in Isauria do not display a homogeneous quality of masonry or structural sophistication. Yet, despite differences, almost all the buildings required not only skill and experience in masonry, but also a substantial workforce and the availability of lifting equipment. In conclusion, the textual and archaeological evidence point to a well-established and organized construction business operating both abroad and at home.

Rural Settlements

In this context of urban centers and trans-Mediterranean connections, the countryside was densely occupied by dispersed settlements

²⁴ Patlagean, *Pauvreté*, 156–81; Trombley, “Korykos,” 16–23; and Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, 102–213.

²⁵ Written sources from the beginning of the first century until the mid-seventh century record the raids of Isaurian bandits living in protected strongholds in the highlands of the Taurus Mountains. Their banditry threatened both coastal towns and inland settlements, farmsteads, and fields. Despite the special measures taken by Roman emperors to control the coastal zone and its resources, Isaurians of the uplands could not be subdued. The settlements of

the limestone hills rising above the Kalykadnos delta were probably targeted by the Isaurian raids due to their wealth and prosperity, in particular during the fifth and sixth centuries. For a discussion of the Roman successes and failures in suppressing the unrest, see B. Shaw, “Bandit Highlands and Lowland Peace: The Mountains of Isauria-Cilicia,” *JESHO* 33 (1990): 199–233, 237–70; and N. Lenski, “Assimilation and Revolt in the Territory of Isauria, From the 1st Century BC to the 6th Century AD,” *JESHO* 42 (1999): 413–65.

and facilities of various sizes and functions.²⁶ Yet none of these settlements appear in ecclesiastical or historical records, nor have their ancient names been epigraphically identified.²⁷ Settlements in this territory range from single villas or farms, to hamlets of 5 to 10 buildings, to large villages covering an area of about 5 ha. Sizeable settlements consist of neighborhoods of different character, suggesting a gradual expansion of separate hamlets, farmsteads, and small villages into much larger settlements as a result of an increase in population and more intensive exploitation of the agropastoral resources. Some agglomerations are large, irregular complexes testifying to several stages of repair, enlargement, and division. Others stand out on account of the presence of opulent structures distinguished by their size, location, and the quality of the masonry and architectural details.

With the exception of the churches and chapels, private or public structures such as markets, hostels, and storehouses cannot be distinguished. Public spaces are simply large open areas of irregular form and they are always endowed with a large public cistern.²⁸ On the other hand, churches and chapels, which became the gathering places of Christian communities, were built sparingly and only in sizeable settlements. Settlements without Christian structures were not necessarily inhabited by pagan populations, as can be inferred from cross signs in domestic contexts. This suggests that churches of sizeable settlements served believers in a large but socially well-connected territory.²⁹

26 This part of Isauria had never been visited by travelers or epigraphists until S. Eyice's discoveries in 1978. See S. Eyice, "Silifke ve dolaylarında yapılan topraküstü arkeolojik araştırmalar raporu (1978–1979)," *Belleten* 44 (1980): 173–76; Eyice, "Einige byzantinische Kleinstädte im Rauhen Kilikien," in *150 Jahre Deutsches Archäologisches Institut: 1829–1979: Festveranstaltungen und internationales Kolloquium, 17.–22. April, 1979 in Berlin* (Mainz, 1981), 204–9 and plates 81–89; and Eyice, "Ricerche e scoperte nella regione di Silifke nella Turchia meridionale," *Milieu* 1 (1988): 15–33. Another team under the direction of G. Dagron visited the area soon after Eyice did. See G. Dagron and O. Callot, "Les bâtisseurs isauriens chez eux: Notes sur trois sites des environs de Silifke," in *Aetos: Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango, Presented to Him on April 14, 1998*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart, 1998), 55–70 and plates 20–25. Both teams studied Karakabaklı and Işıkkale briefly with a

focus on the basilicas and a number of well-preserved buildings. This was followed by Hild and Hellenkemper's survey for the preparation of the *TIB* volumes on Cilicia and Isauria. See H. Hellenkemper and F. Hild, *Neue Forschungen in Kilikien* (Vienna, 1986); and Hild and Hellenkemper, *Kilikien* (above, n. 9). In 1995 M. İ. Tunay conducted one season of reconnaissance survey in the area. See M. İ. Tunay, "Survey of Silifke and Surrounding Area 1995," *ArSonTop* 14 (1996): 329–38. Recently I. Eichner studied the structures previously published by Eyice and Dagron, for her dissertation research on the early Byzantine houses in Cilicia. See I. Eichner, "Frühbyzantinische Wohnhäuser in Kilikien: Arbeitsbericht über die Kampagne 2003 und einige Ergebnisse des Projektes," *ArSonTop* 22 (2004): 201–212. M. H. Sayar has been conducting an epigraphic survey in Cilicia since the early 1990s. The results of his work have been published annually in the *ArSonTop* since 1993.

27 The only exception is the remains at the modern village of Demircili (Dösene), recorded in a second-century inscription as *Imbriogon Kome* (Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, 26–28 [above, n. 5]).

28 Although these open-air spaces were conceived as gathering places for the community, they are not public places in an urban sense. Nevertheless, their presence in a rural context is significant in itself. In addition, it is conceivable that threshing floors, at times as large as 20 m in diameter, were used for markets and social gatherings.

29 St. Thekla's miracles concerning the conversion of pagans to Christianity suggest that paganism persisted in the countryside as late as the mid-fifth century. Moreover, a Jewish population is attested by inscriptions in Korykos, Seleukeia, and Diokaisareia, although Jews are archaeologically invisible in the rural countryside. See Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, passim (above, n. 5); and M. H. Williams, "The Jewish Community of Corycus: Two More Inscriptions," *ZPapEpig* 92 (1992): 248–52.



Fig. 2 The tetrapylon in Karakabaklı

The theme of connectivity is further manifested by the remains of roads, paths, and tracks, suitable only for pack animals and pedestrians, which secured communications among fields; threshing floors; presses; and settlements of all sizes and importance. Large cisterns are built along the routes at regular intervals to serve travelers, pastoralists, and their flocks, as well as nearby settlements.

Dagron coined the term *bourgade* to denote sizeable settlements having both rural and urban characteristics. This intermediary status corresponds to the term *komopolis* inscribed on a stone fragment reemployed in the pavement of the main road connecting Akhayat and Işıkkale, two large villages that were the focus of the mapping survey in 2003.³⁰ These two settlements complicate the definition of cities versus villages, because they clearly occupy a position between the two. Their setting, the use of topography with a concern for beautiful vistas, the expression of monumentality, and modest yet elegant architectural decoration indicate an interest in planning, representation, and display at the settlement level. In addition, while many other settlements in the area did not have churches, the presence of small yet monumental basilicas in Işıkkale and Karakabaklı suggests that these two settlements had a different status.

Both settlements are endowed with paved roads and tetrapylons, which are not only unusual in nonurban settings, but also unknown in any other rural settlement along the Yenibahçe ravine (fig. 2).

30 G. Dagron, "Entre village et cité: La bourgade rurale des IV^e-VII^e siècles en Orient," *Koinônia* 3 (1979): 29–52. The inscription is published in Dagron and Callot, "Bâtisseurs isauriens," 55–70 (above, n. 26).



Fig. 3 Large building at Işıkkale; the masonry arches support the second floor of the structure

Nevertheless threshing floors, presses, mills, and stables, which were an integral part of the habitat, reveal the rural nature of the settlements. Işıkkale and Karakabaklı included several dozen houses, churches, cisterns, paved streets, cemeteries, oil and wine production structures, and grain-processing devices. They are also distinct from other settlements in this territory because of the greater variety and number of surviving structures and by their proximity to the harbor at Korasion. They are fairly large (ca. 5 ha), unfortified villages consisting mainly of one- and two-story residential buildings constructed entirely of local limestone. Stone walls and arches support the floors and the pitched roof covered with ceramic tiles (fig. 3). A few buildings are distinguished by their size, siting (e.g., overlooking the sea or open fields, location at the perimeter or in less crowded neighborhoods), the quality of the masonry, the presence of architectural sculpture (e.g., capitals decorated with simple geometric or floral motifs), and the treatment of architectural elements (e.g., balcony, arched double windows).

Houses in Karakabaklı are relatively large and spread over the village territory (fig. 4). Only a few show concern for decoration: simple crosses on the lintels and crudely executed double-mullion columns and capitals (fig. 5). Scholars have studied a few houses due to their unusual characteristics: one is distinguished by its peristyle preceding the house, which, in contrast to northern Syrian houses, is not a common feature of Isaurian domestic architecture. As in the late antique villages

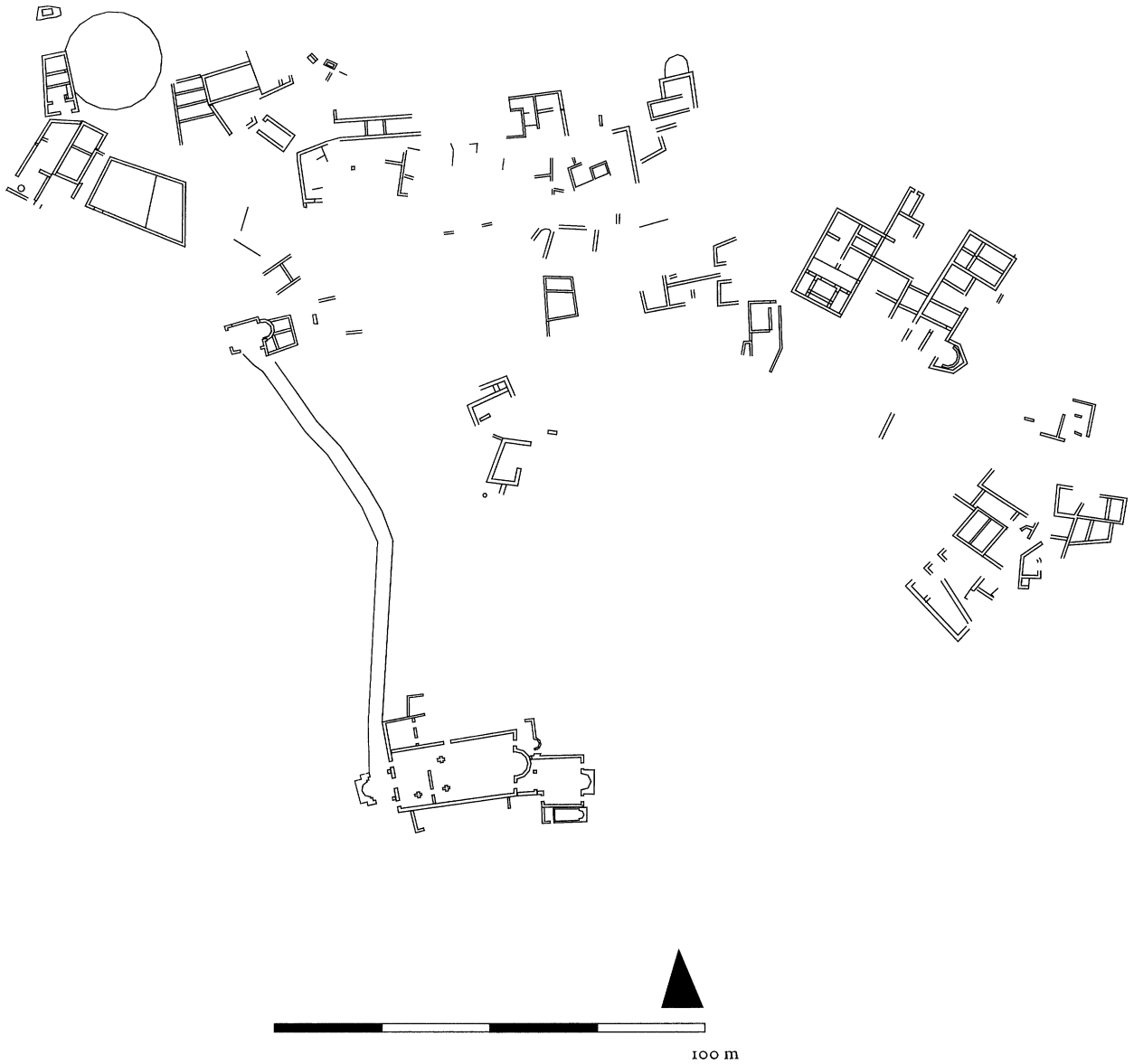


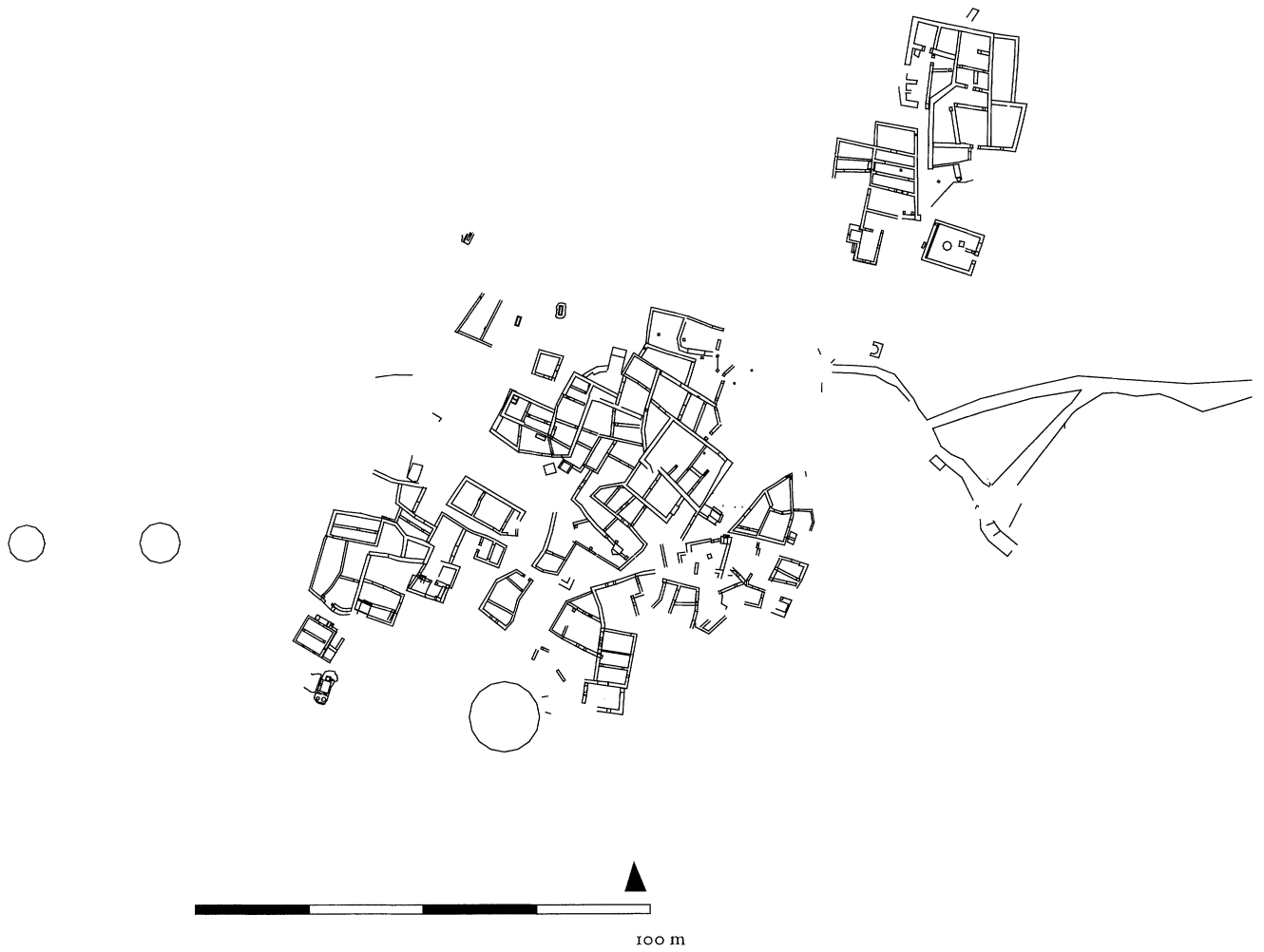
Fig. 4 Settlement plan of the main agglomeration at Karakabaklı; the drawing is based on the partial geo-rectification of aerial photographs, because the mapping survey of the settlement is incomplete. Therefore the accuracy of the plan is low; and it should be used only as a reference for the layout of the settlement.

of the northern Syrian limestone massif, one might imagine a separation of functions in the buildings, with the lower story reserved for food processing and housing of animals, and the upper floors serving as residential quarters. However, evidence for such a division is limited to a few cases where rock-cut basins, mills, and presses are located on the first floor.

The settlement of Işıkkale consists of two sections very different from one another (fig. 6). The western part is a complex agglomeration of undecorated structures gradually incorporated into the ensemble by adding rooms and blocking streets. A roughly rectangular public space organized around a small public cistern serves as the focal point where the main streets intersect (fig. 7). Simple crosses on the two doors facing the cistern suggest that this part of the settlement was built



Fig. 5 House in Karakabaklı; the freestanding house at the periphery of the settlement is distinguished by its elaborate façades and architectural decoration.



or continued to be inhabited contemporaneously with the basilica of the village. The western section (see fig. 6) is connected to the basilica located at the highest point by a paved road that seems to have been built to serve the church. In contrast, the eastern section consists mostly of larger freestanding structures, which are architecturally more sophisticated.

Both settlements are adorned by a single monumental church complex, in both cases a three-aisled basilica with galleries, although the Karakabaklı complex has an unusual plan with a smaller basilical structure added to the southeastern end of the main church (figs. 8 and 9). Architectural decoration is very limited, as in many other monumental churches of Isauria: capitals of local limestone, faint traces of stucco decoration, and meager evidence of opus sectile.³¹ Karakabaklı

31 Marble is rarely utilized in the early Byzantine structures of Isauria. Examples are restricted to Zeno's church at St. Thekla and a number of basilicas in Korykos. Even the skillful architectural decoration of the two churches at Alahan is executed in local stone.

Fig. 6 Settlement plan of Işıkkale

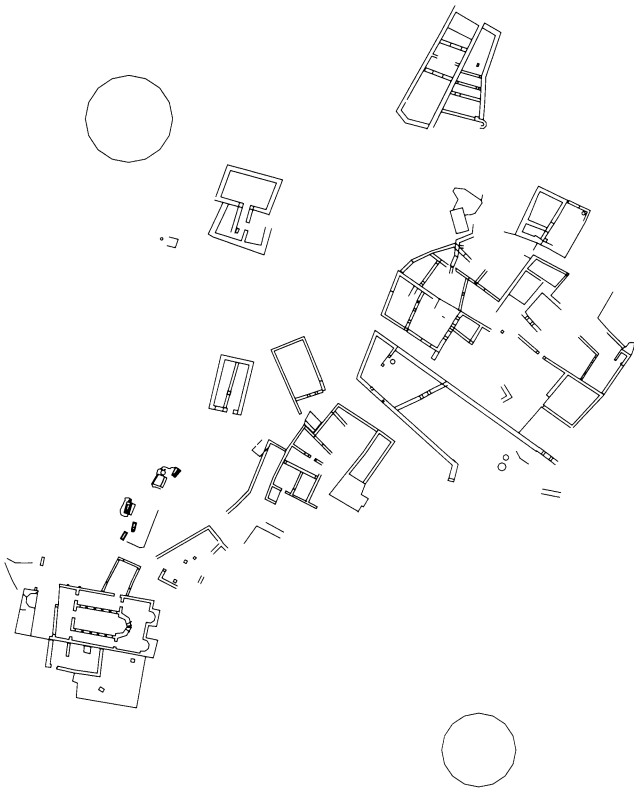


Fig. 7 The public space in the western neighborhood of Işıkkale; the main streets of the neighborhood intersect in this public space, which is endowed with a cistern.





basilica has undergone several phases of construction, which cannot be securely dated without further fieldwork. At a later phase, the windows of the main basilica were blocked and a small chapel was added to the southeastern corner of the complex. Although the building materials are restricted to wood and the local limestone quarried on site, one can legitimately describe these structures as monumental and expensive, and see them as indices of prosperity.

Economic Base

The presence of numerous expensive masonry houses and large churches with some decoration show that the marginal limestone hills were exploited beyond the requirements of a subsistence economy. Georges Tate's research on the economic base of the prosperity in north Syrian villages revealed that multicultural agriculture (i.e., the cultivation of many crops) was practiced using both the plains and the limestone hills, contrary to Georges Tchalenko's emphasis on a monoculture of olive.³² In the case of Isauria, the ubiquity of threshing floors and pressing installations spread over the territory suggests that widespread and multicultural agropastoral production was incorporated into the village life at both the domestic and commercial level. Large and well-built threshing floors, almost always associated with a press and a cistern, can be found within or at the periphery of settlements, as well as in remote areas close to the fields (fig. 10). The fact that they are always associated with a nearby pressing facility and cistern brings into question the function of both the threshing floors and

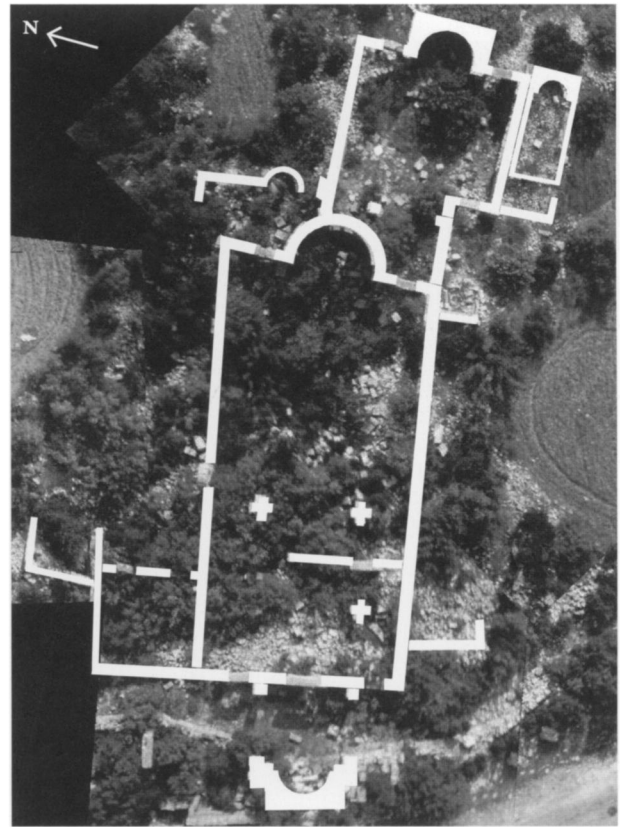


Fig. 8 The aerial photo of the basilica at Işıkkale, first half of the sixth century

Fig. 9 The aerial photo of the basilica at Karakabaklı; the plan of the surviving structure is drawn on the photograph based on field observations. The photograph and drawing are not scaled or rectified.

³² G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord: Le massif du Bélus à l'époque romaine* (Paris, 1953–58); G. Tate, "Un cas de croissance économique en zone marginale: La Syrie du Nord," *Histoire, économie et société* 3 (1997): 353–59; and Tate, *Campagnes* (above, n. 1).



Fig. 10 Threshing floor at Işıkkale

the presses. The threshing floors were originally devised for threshing and winnowing grains, two processes that necessitate neither presses nor cisterns.³³ The dry *terra rossa* soil characteristic of the region is very suitable for the cultivation of grains, because these do not require irrigation. However, there is not sufficient soil surface to produce a grain surplus large enough to create the wealth and prosperity reflected by the costly and labor-intensive structures. In other words the size and number of threshing floors seem to exceed the agricultural capacity of the limestone hills.

In the *Iliad* and the New Testament, the term ἀλοή is used to denote both a threshing floor and a vineyard.³⁴ There is ample evidence suggesting that Isauria and Cilicia indeed played a significant role in

³³ The threshing floors are circular, paved or cut into the bedrock, and surrounded by a low wall. First the crop is threshed, i.e., an animal-drawn threshing sledge is used to separate the ears from the chaff. Then the grain is winnowed, i.e., tossed into the air using wooden forks, rakes, or similar equipment. Thus the light chaff flows away with the wind while the heavy grain falls on the floor. The low circular wall keeps the animals

on the floor as well as preventing the loss of grain. See J. C. Whittaker, "Alonia: The Ethnoarchaeology of Cypriot Threshing Floors," *JMA* 12.1 (1999): 7–25; and L. Cheetham, "Threshing and Winnowing—an Ethnographic Study," *Antiquity* 56.217 (1982): 127–30. It is notoriously difficult to date threshing floors, especially because they were continuously used without modification up until modern times. In Işıkkale and

Karakabaklı, threshing floors are usually built on piles of broken stones that are the remnants of quarrying and construction activities. This structure suggests that they were probably contemporaneous with the neighboring buildings. However, a careful study is required to correlate each threshing floor to the phases of settlement.

³⁴ A. D. Ure, "Threshing-Floor or Vineyard," *CQ* 5, 3/4 (1955): 225–30.



Fig. 11 Olive/wine press at Akhayat; the pressing mechanism is schematically drawn on the photograph.

the production and trade of wine: textual references to Cilician wine, the epigraphic record for wine trade, the remains of presses, the vine iconography in the material remains, and evidence for kiln sites of Late Roman Amphora 1, the most widely distributed jar of late antiquity, in Cyprus, north Syria, and on the southern coast of Asia Minor.³⁵ Numerous pressing installations, found quite frequently near threshing floors, could be primarily used for pressing grapes or olives. The extraction of grape juice is fairly easy: a light pressing mill (or even

35 Textual, epigraphic, and archaeological evidence for Cilician wine production and trade are discussed in M. Decker, "The Wine Trade of Cilicia in Late Antiquity," *ARAM* 17 (2005): 51–59. Although I agree with Michael Decker that the role of Isauria and Cilicia in the wine trade has been neglected, I believe that the press installations commonly found in the region were con-

structed primarily for the extraction of olive oil. The thick sidewalls with a socket for the insertion of the pressing beam and the heavy stone counterweights are elements of an oil mill. However, these treading floors connected to large vats could also easily be used for pressing grapes. In addition, establishing a direct correlation between wine trade and Late Roman 1 amphorae is misleading, in that

this amphora type and its varieties were used to transport different kinds of products. See H. Elton, "The Economy of Southern Asia Minor and LR 1 Amphorae," in *LRCW I: Late Roman Coarse Wares, Cooking Wares and Amphorae in the Mediterranean: Archaeology and Archaeometry*, ed. J. Ma. Gurti i Esparraguera, J. Buxeda i Garrigós, and M. A. Cau Ontiveros (Oxford, 2005), 691–95.

pressing by feet) and storage vat are sufficient. In other words, the pressing devices found in the region are more than enough for large-scale production of wine.

On the other hand, olive oil production is much more labor-intensive. First, olives have to be crushed and reduced into paste to get rid of the bitter juice. Then the olive paste, after being placed in woven baskets or mats, is pressed several times by means of a heavy mechanism consisting of a wooden pressing lever and stone weights (simple or screw) (fig. 11).³⁶ Using the treading floor of the press installations for the whole process posed two problems: first, the treading surface was crowded by the large and heavy components of the pressing lever (simple or screw). If the olives were crushed on the treading floor, these components had to be subsequently removed from the premises, then reinstalled for the actual pressing procedure. Second, both the surface and the vat into which the bitter juice would be channeled had to be thoroughly cleaned before the actual oil extraction started. Therefore, if the threshing floors were used to crush a large quantity of olives by means of large millstones perhaps operated by animals, the press could operate continuously and more efficiently. If this were the case, we might argue that the production of olive oil was an organized and collective activity, probably involving teams trained and experienced in handling the press on a constant basis during the olive-harvesting season. In addition, threshing floors could serve other functions such as drying grapes and herbs, treading and dyeing wool, and processing goat hair and animal skin. In conclusion, the material evidence suggests diverse agricultural and pastoral strategies, which required the construction of multifunctional devices that could be used for processing a variety of agricultural and animal products such as wine and oil of various plants—in particular olive, cheese, and textiles.³⁷

The diversity of available products is also evident in the epigraphic record from the fifth to the seventh centuries. Funerary inscriptions found at Seleukeia, Diokaisareia, Korasion, and in particular at Korykos provide evidence for the consumption of several products that were manufactured or supplied as raw materials by the hinterland. Merchants of wine, olive oil, pistachios, herbs, and fruits; aromatic

36 Techniques of the production of wine and olive oil in antiquity are studied in detail in the following sources: J.-P. Brun, *Le vin et l'huile dans la Méditerranée antique: viticulture, oléiculture et procédés de transformation* (Paris, 2003); R. Frankel, *Wine and Oil Production in Antiquity in Israel and Other Mediterranean Countries* (Sheffield, 1999); O. Callot, *Huileries antiques de Syrie du Nord* (Paris, 1984); and M.-C. Amouretti

and J.-P. Brun, eds., *La production du vin et de l'huile en Méditerranée* (Athens, 1993).

37 The multifunctionality of such devices has been suggested in the scholarship based on both archaeological evidence and ethno-archaeological research. See J.-P. Brun, "La discrimination entre les installations oléicoles et vinicoles," in Amouretti and Brun, *Production*, 511–37.

oils and soaps; shoes, breeches, flax, wool, and goat hair products are epigraphically recorded.³⁸ There is no doubt that most of these products were provided by the villagers in the hinterland, in particular wool and goat products, herbs, oils (laurel and olive), wine, and pistachios which, with the exception of wine, still play an important role in the economy of the region.

Dating

Unfortunately, precise dating of these rural settlements is so far not possible. The pottery assemblages consist predominantly of coarse wares of local production for storage and cooking.³⁹ More informative is the epigraphic record despite its small size. Inscriptions span the period from the first to the fifth and sixth centuries, with a concentration in the third and fourth. The lack or dearth of epigraphic evidence from the sixth century and beyond does not necessarily indicate that settlements were abandoned, as has traditionally been assumed. In the western part of Rough Cilicia, public construction, funerary monuments, and inscriptions are rarely dated beyond the early Roman period; yet recent archaeological surveys have revealed continuous population growth and settlement expansion during the late Roman period.⁴⁰ The paucity of inscriptions is a common phenomenon all over the Mediterranean after the third century, which suggests rather the decline and disappearance of the habit of displaying texts.⁴¹

More substantial conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of architectural remains. The surviving structures and settlements display a number of phases of occupation. Both Işıkkale and Karakabaklı have two clearly distinct but continuous phases of occupation separated by at least a generation. In both settlements, the main streets underwent significant transformations. Their tetrapylons, armatures of Roman urbanism marking the frontiers of settlements and the intersections of major roads, lost their functions when they were incorporated into the newly built chapels (fig. 12). At Karakabaklı about 100 m south of such a chapel, the same paved road was blocked once more for the building of a large church. In Işıkkale the building of the basilica in the first half of the sixth century seems to have included a paved street connecting the pre-existing road to the church. However, the roads were not completely closed off throughout their trajectory, but only for

38 Patlagean, *Pauvreté*, 156–81 (above, n. 19); Trombley, “Korykos,” 16–23 (above, n. 19); and Keil and Wilhelm, *Denkmäler*, 102–213 (above, n. 5).

39 The coarse wares and a few examples of glazed pottery discovered mostly at hilltop settlements are currently being studied by Çiğdem Toskay.

40 Blanton, *Settlement Patterns*, 60 (above, n. 3).

41 M. Whittow, “Recent Research on the Late-Antique City in Asia Minor: The Second Half of the 6th-c. Revisited,” in *Recent Research in Late-Antique Urbanism*, ed. L. Lavan (Portsmouth, 2001), 140; C. Roueché, “Asia Minor and Cyprus,” in *CAH* 14 (Cambridge, 2000), 570–87.

the building of ecclesiastical structures. Therefore, in both villages we see a transformation of the settlements in such a way as to accommodate ecclesiastical buildings.

Reused pagan tombs, churches, chapels, and cross signs on doors attest to the Christianization of the overall region, where paganism probably continued well into the mid-fifth century. Burials were incorporated into the settlement, along the main streets or next to the houses where the deceased may have spent his or her life. Next to the basilica of Işıkkale, three sarcophagi carrying pagan iconography stand side by side with olive-wine presses and a cistern. In this case, it seems that after the bones were discarded, the tanks of the sarcophagi were employed in the pressing process. In several other instances, tombs were disturbed to be reused by the new inhabitants for new burials.

The major period of prosperity and expansion for Işıkkale, manifested by the building of its monumental basilica, can be roughly dated to the first half of the sixth century from an evaluation of the architectural sculpture. The capitals of the basilica generally follow the fashions of the big centers, but they are adapted to local material and taste. They display a certain acquaintance with Constantinopolitan models, probably through the Proconnesian marble capitals that adorned Seleukeia, Diokaisareia, and Korykos, and show affinities with the architectural sculpture of Alahan. These towns must have drawn some of their workforce for construction from the rural population. If the Isaurian builders attested in Constantinople, Syria, and Palestine in the sixth century can be associated with the inhabitants of these settlements, we might also seek further links to explain the presence of metropolitan trends, workshop practices, and tastes in these modest settlements. Despite affinities with the Proconnesian styles, the architectural sculpture of the Işıkkale basilica does not follow the original models too closely and thereby shows local innovation. Although some capitals are translations of metropolitan models to limestone, others combine different models in the same capital. The eight column capitals and four pilaster capitals at the ground-level colonnade of the Işıkkale basilica almost all differ from one another. Furthermore, the northern colonnade is strikingly different from the southern one: whereas the capitals on the north side are deeply and delicately cut, on the south the capitals are very roughly shaped and the foliage is barely marked by shallow incisions; in other words, although they are not incomplete, they are not fully worked either.

At the ground-level colonnade, two variants of the Theodosian mask capital are used: in the northern colonnade the late-fifth-



Fig. 12 The tetrapylon/chapel in Karakabaklı; the tetrapylon was transformed into a chapel by adding an eastern apse and blocking the main street of the settlement.



13



14



15



16

Fig. 13 Column capital from the northern colonnade of the basilica at Işıkkale; this capital follows Constantinopolitan models of the late fifth century, characterized by acanthus leaves having two teeth in each mouth.

Fig. 14 Column capital from the southern colonnade of the basilica at Işıkkale; this capital follows Constantinopolitan models of the early sixth century, characterized by acanthus leaves having four teeth in each mouth.

Fig. 15 Column capital from the southern colonnade of the basilica at Işıkkale; this capital represents a local adaptation combining mask acanthus with fine-toothed acanthus.

Fig. 16 Column capital from the southern colonnade of the basilica at Işıkkale; this capital is very shallowly cut, unlike the capitals of the northern colonnade.

century version with two upturned leaves (“teeth”) in each mouth (fig. 13), in the southern colonnade the early-sixth-century version with four upward leaves in each mouth (fig. 14).⁴² A variant of fine-toothed acanthus capital, datable to the first half of the sixth century, appears side by side in the northern colonnade with a peculiar capital combining mask acanthus with fine-toothed acanthus (fig. 15). Furthermore, the sketchy capitals of the southern colonnade in Işıkkale may suggest haste in completing the church (fig. 16). Alternatively this sketchiness could be the product of a loosely organized workshop, most probably a local endeavor, which gave the sculptor-mason or his apprentice a certain liberty for experimentation. One is tempted to suggest the completion of the church by apprentices, not fully trained by masters, who left for more important projects.

The juxtaposition of different colors and styles was part of the late antique taste. The combination of various capital types in the same church or house is also a common phenomenon in the villages of the limestone massif in northern Syria. Christine Strube’s monumental study of the architectural sculpture in northern Syrian villages records quite disparate local traditions, which responded differently to the

⁴² The variant of the mask acanthus capital with two upturned leaves is known in Constantinople as early as the end of the fourth century (e.g., the arch of Theodosios, ca. 393, and the propylaion of Saint Sophia, ca. 405). The variant with four upturned leaves is known from

Justinianic buildings such as San Vitale in Ravenna. I follow here the dating and terminology in W. Betsch, “The History, Production and Distribution of the Late Antique Capital in Constantinople” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1977), 68–69, 208–10.

repertory and techniques of urban workshops and great building projects in the countryside such as Qal'at Sem'an and Qalb Loze. Two examples from the early sixth century suffice to illustrate the complexity of sculptural traditions in rural contexts. In the Syrian church of Herbet Hasan, one finds three different treatments of acanthus leaves all on the same capital. This lack of uniformity can be explained by the modes of organization and patronage rather than different phases of construction. The picture is further complicated by the early-sixth-century parish churches of smaller villages harking back to old models, which led scholars to date them erroneously to the fourth and fifth centuries.⁴³ The examples from the Syrian limestone massif prove that there was not a steady evolution of sculptural styles and techniques; in other words, two churches very close to each other in date and location could display entirely different decoration. The metropolitan models that the sculptors of the Işıkkale basilica imitated belong to the late fifth or early sixth century. Yet, when assigning a date to the basilica based solely on architectural sculpture, we should allow a possible time gap between the production of the original and its local adaptation. In other words, the fashions and tastes that had long since become obsolete in major centers might have been picked up or revived much later, and translated to the local materials in a rural environment like Işıkkale and Karakabaklı.

Masonry techniques may be used only with extreme caution for dating purposes due to the continuity of masonry styles from the Roman into the Byzantine period. The contemporaneity of expensive and labor-intensive ashlar masonry with unattractive masonry made of small rectangular stones bound with mortar has been emphasized by a number of scholars.⁴⁴ Yet a close study of masonry in correlation with datable material may provide possible ranges of dates, which can be used to situate otherwise undatable remains in a chronological framework. My first attempt to classify building techniques and masonry styles resulted in a number of patterns and showed that Isaurian construction was much more varied than has previously been thought. Ashlar construction of large finely-cut stones, usually attributed to the Roman imperial period, has a very long life in Isauria. It is used for arches, vaults, domes, and corners as well as the main body of walls (fig. 17). It is associated with both the third-century tombs and sixth-century churches. Rubble stone-mortar construction appears together

43 C. Strube, *Baudekoration im Nordsyrischen Kalksteinmassiv* (Mainz am Rhein, 1993), 2: 226–36 and plates 123–24.

44 G. Mietke and S. Westphalen, "Basilica 3 in Kanlıdivane (Kanytelis)," *IM* 49 (1999): 517–26; and O. Feld,

"Beobachtungen an spätantiken und frühchristlichen Bauten in Kilikien: Bericht über eine Reise," *RQ* 60, 1/2 (1965): 131–43 and plates 1–8.



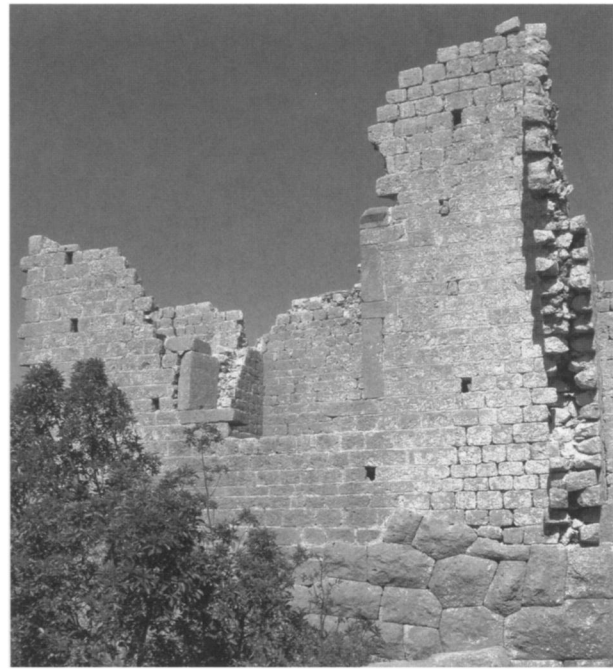
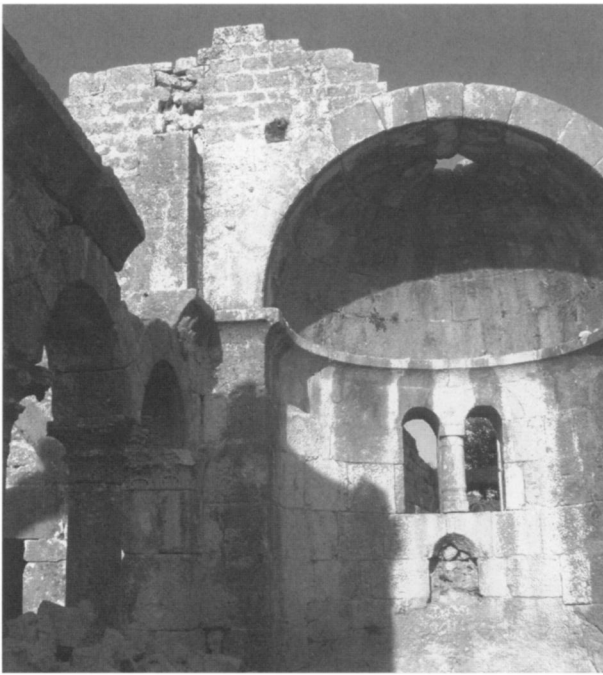
Fig. 17 Ashlar masonry in a structure at Işıkkale

with ashlar masonry in several structures, in particular at the early sixth-century basilica of Işıkkale (fig. 18). Rubble stone-mortar construction is also represented at hilltop settlements such as Paslı and Barakçıkalesi, where Hellenistic structures were incorporated into the new buildings (fig. 19). The presence of this type of masonry typical of the late fifth and early sixth centuries in well-protected hilltop settlements may point to the longevity of this cheap and easy technique perhaps even throughout the so-called Dark Ages.

End of Antiquity

Like its counterparts overall in the eastern Mediterranean, such as Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, the rural countryside of Isauria was intensively settled and exploited in the fifth and sixth centuries. The clashes between Anastasius's forces and the Isaurian brigands do not seem to have had widespread negative effects in the region. To the contrary, the end of the fifth century and the sixth century seem to have been especially prosperous in Isauria. Although Zeno's contribution to his native land's prosperity, apart from his dedication of a basilica at Saint Thekla, cannot be confirmed, Isaurian contacts with Constantinople may have strengthened in the second part of the fifth century.

The conditions of life in the rural countryside during the turmoils of the late seventh and eighth centuries are unknown, and there is no evidence to support the assumption that rural settlements were abandoned in the seventh century in the aftermath of Persian and Arab raids. We do not know either whether the rural population declined up to the point of extinction on account of the Justinianic plague of 542



and its recurrences. The so-called Dark Ages were undoubtedly chaotic and difficult, very different from the peaceful and prosperous world of the eastern Mediterranean during the late Roman period. Both written and archaeological evidence confirm the end of the civic era through the processes of ruralization, shrinkage, and finally the abandonment of major urban centers, the substantial reduction in long-distance trade, and the decrease in population. Anemourion, about 100 km west of Seleukeia, was reduced in size already by the end of the seventh century and saw little or no activity in the eighth. Sagalassos in Pisidia displays an earlier decline between the mid-fifth and seventh centuries, diagnosed by a drastic fall in the number of settlements and shrinkage in the occupied area within the city. The city was finally abandoned in the mid-seventh century in the aftermath of a major earthquake.⁴⁵

However, the conditions prevailing at coastal settlements do not necessarily hold true for uplands, and likewise the transformations that the cities underwent may have been different from those in the countryside. Furthermore, the impacts of the series of natural and human-induced calamities differed substantially from one place to the other. For example, the Arab invasion of Cyprus in the mid-seventh century was a serious blow to the livelihood of the islanders, especially in terms

Fig. 18 Rubble stone-mortar masonry at the basilica of Işıkkale; skillfully executed ashlar masonry is used for the apse, arches, vaults, and domes, while the rubble stone-mortar masonry is reserved for the walls.

Fig. 19 Rubble stone-mortar masonry and Hellenistic masonry in a tower at Barakçıkalesi; the rubble stone-mortar masonry is used to repair structures of Hellenistic date.

⁴⁵ J. Russell, "Anemourion," in *The Economic History of Byzantium: From the Seventh Through the Fifteenth Century*, ed. A. E. Laiou (Washington, D.C., 2002), 1: 221–28; and M. Waelkens and the Sagalassos team, "Interdisciplinarity in

Classical Archaeology. A Case Study: The Sagalassos Archaeological Research Project (Southwest Turkey)," in *Sagalassos IV: Report on the Survey and Excavation Campaigns of 1994 and 1995*, ed. M. Waelkens and J. Poblome (Leuven, 1997), 237–38.

of the disruption of their commercial networks. Despite the instability, some level of construction continued on various parts of the island, as attested by the restoration of the basilica at Soloi, dated securely to 655 by its building inscription.⁴⁶ Small-scale construction and renovation work continued in other ecclesiastical sites such as Amathos and Saint Barnabas.⁴⁷ Research in Cyprus has showed that the decline of coastal cities and the disruption of trade networks led to the reorganization of economic activities toward a more subsistence-oriented economy. The population shifted towards inland areas, while a small percentage of lowland settlements continued to be settled. Similarly in northern Syria, scholars assumed that the prosperous limestone villages were completely abandoned in the mid-seventh century. However, the excavations in the village of Dêhès revealed a continuity of settlement at a reduced scale until the ninth century, while no new structures were built after the seventh.⁴⁸

Isaurian cities and rural settlements had a special status in the aftermath of the Arab invasions. The region had already gained military importance during the Sassanian wars, when Herakleios used Seleukeia as a base and established a temporary mint between 616 and 618. When Arab armies conquered north Africa, Palestine, and Syria, the Byzantine state, now in even greater need of resources to strengthen its army, was deprived of substantial tax revenues and supplies. With the establishment of the Arab-Byzantine frontier along the Lamos River between 650 and 963, Isauria must have gained an unprecedented importance for the Byzantine armies. During the period of Arab control of eastern Cilicia, Isauria was certainly quite active at least from a military point of view. Naturally the presence of the military required the supply of food and equipment, which could be procured most easily and safely from the immediate countryside. These new circumstances must have resulted in increasing demand and pressure on the territorium of Seleukeia to supply the army. In addition, the cessation or decrease in production and trade might have created an opportunity for Isaurian producers who must have benefited from the relative security provided by the presence of the military and imperial control in Seleukeia. The intensification of the exploitation of the land and the densification of settlement patterns might be related to these demands. Moreover, the lack of architectural decoration, the small number of churches, and the construction of threshing floors in the middle of settlements, next to new structures built with mortared rubble rather than solid masonry, might be indications of the necessity to channel resources to an increased agropastoral activity in the countryside.

Limited but very significant evidence exists for the survival of several settlements in Isauria throughout the Dark Ages. Episcopal lists, ecclesiastical registers, and seals provide evidence for the

⁴⁶ Roueché, *CAH* 14:586.

⁴⁷ J.-P. Sodini et al., "Dêhès (Syrie du Nord), Campagnes I–III (1976–1978): Recherches sur l'habitat rural," *Syria* 57.1 (1980): 1–301.

⁴⁸ See Rautman et al., *Cypriot Village*, 258–62 (above, n. 1).

continuous existence of Seleukeia as the administrative and religious center. Ecclesiastical lists are not always reliable proofs of the existence of a city. But seals belonging to several imperial offices in Seleukeia provide indisputable evidence for the continuity of administrative, religious, military, and commercial activities during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries. A seventh-century seal belongs to an arms factory, indicative of the increasing military activity in the region. The factory would certainly require raw materials and fuel, as well as food and clothing for the workers. Other seals dating from 668 to 713 belong to *genikoi kommerkiarioi* (fiscal officials) of the *apothēkē* (warehouse) of Isauria and Cilicia. We do not know what were the contents, capacity, and functions of these state warehouses. The *apothēkē*, most probably not simply a storage space, rather housed specific commercial activity for the sale of arms and military equipment.⁴⁹ Seals of the *genikoi* and the arms factory date from the latter part of the seventh century, when Isauria became a frontier between Byzantine and Arab states. The limestone hills, which were relatively more protected from the Arab attacks and possessed an established system of road networks, agricultural facilities, water collection sources, and standing buildings, may have been put to some level of use for the provisioning of the state and ecclesiastical structure in Seleukeia, as well as the military forces located along the frontier. Seals of several imperial and ecclesiastical officials prove the continuity of activity in Seleukeia during the eighth, ninth, and tenth centuries.⁵⁰

The fate of the city of Korykos is obscure. The prosperous and lively port of the fifth, sixth, and early seventh centuries must have been dealt a serious blow due to its location right on the frontier between the Byzantine and Arab states. Its existence until the very end of the seventh century is proven by two seals, one belonging to a *kommerkiarios* and the other depicting it as a support point of the navy in 698.⁵¹ After these there is no evidence about Korykos until the ninth century, when it resurfaces in administrative and military texts. The history of the port of Korasion beyond the seventh century is completely unknown.

49 G. Zacos and A. Vegler, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel, 1972), 1, 1: 231, 236, 240–41, 257, 287, and 727, nos. 149, 154, 158–59, 177, 212, and 1136. For a discussion of the definitions and changing roles of the *kommerkiarioi* (state officials in charge of certain trade activities), see N. Oikonomides, “The Role of the Byzantine State in the Economy,” in *The Economic History of Byzantium*, 3: 983–88. It seems that the original function of the *apothēkē* was to serve as a sales point for surplus

products, in particular luxury items such as silk. Private merchants could be involved in the provisioning as long as they paid taxes. For a detailed discussion of this establishment, see M. F. Hendy, *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c. 300–1450* (Cambridge, 1985), 626–34.

50 The importance of the city continued especially due to the crusader activity. Anna Komnena informs us about the orders of Emperor Alexios I to his admiral and secretary Eustathios, to reinforce the defenses

of Seleukeia and Korykos as strongholds against the crusaders in 1099/1100. See Anna Komnena, *Alexiade, règne de l'empereur Alexis I Comnène, 1081–1118*, ed. B. Leib (Paris, 1937–76), vol. 3, book 11. Seleukeia remained under Byzantine control until about the 1180s, when it was seized by the Armenian baron Levon II. See Hild and Hellenkemper, *Kilikien*, 402–6.

51 Zacos and Vegler, *Seals*, 180.

On the other hand, upland cities seem to have survived these difficult periods. In the last quarter of the eighth century, Diokaisareia's bishop is recorded in a letter, and the settlement appears in the tenth century as a city in Constantine Porphyrogenitos's *De thematibus*.⁵²

The dramatic change in political, military, and commercial conditions must have affected patterns of land use and settlement in the rural landscape. The reutilization of the Hellenistic forts and towers may indicate an increasing need to supervise the main routes and fields by means of reliable telegraphy beacons.⁵³ In the rural settlements presented in this paper, the structures, houses, churches, presses, and cisterns do not show any signs of destruction; therefore they may have been used for centuries with very little intervention, constructed mostly with perishable materials such as timber and adobe. After the Arab conquest of Cyprus and eastern Cilicia, the cultivation of the Kalykadnos delta must have become less reliable. This would necessitate a more intensive exploitation of the marginal zones. It is possible that the population severely declined due to migrations, wars, and the plague. In such circumstances, semi-nomadic pastoralism as it is still practiced today may have become a more adaptive, safer, and profitable mode of life. The fall and winter, safe from Arab raids, could be spent at settlements like Işıkkale and Karakabaklı at a lower altitude. This would also coincide with the harvesting of olives, which took place in late autumn and early winter. On the other hand, springs and summers at higher altitudes in the Taurus Mountains could be spent grazing flocks and harvesting grapes. This mode of transhumance might have become a good alternative, until increased security and flourishing economy made the coasts more attractive at the end of the ninth century.

Certainly the population did not thrive and prosper after the mid-seventh century. But the countryside was better equipped than the cities to survive through difficult times; moreover, it was not an immediate target for invaders. In difficult economic conditions, allocation of resources to expensive and labor-intensive structures would not be expected. Yet in the absence of destruction, existing settlements and facilities could be employed, and changes and repairs could be made sparingly using perishable materials. The very limited use of spolia may indicate that it was unnecessary to build new structures of costly masonry. Until the revival of the economy and strengthening of the Byzantine state, the population, much smaller than before, might have lived on in these settlements in a very modest fashion.

To date, my project has provided new evidence for an understudied region, whose history is tightly connected to the histories of various peoples and cultures of the ancient and medieval eastern Mediterranean. The preliminary results of my reconnaissance survey constitute only a very small sample of the material culture of the late

52 A. Pertusi, ed., *Costantino Porfirogenito "De thematibus"* (Vatican, 1952), 13.

53 For a survey of surviving towers, see S. Durugönül, *Türme und Siedlungen im Rauhen Kilikien: Eine Unterzuchung zu den archäologischen Hinterlassenschaften im Olbischen Territorium* (Bonn, 1998), passim.

antique Mediterranean. Its significance lies in the good state of preservation of the remains, the diversity and richness of the evidence, Isauria's connections to the Anatolian plateau and the Mediterranean, and the transformation of a relatively marginal region into a province on the frontier of the Byzantine and Arab states. In many respects, the example of Isauria recalls many other rural landscapes of late antiquity, especially the well-studied limestone massif of northern Syria. Yet it also drastically differs from other examples in the Levant in that it remained as a Byzantine stronghold. Therefore it is of paradigmatic value for understanding the formation and character of medieval Byzantine settlements.

In my research, I incorporated the theories and methods of a holistic landscape approach to the documentation and interpretation of Isaurian landscapes. This theoretical framework allows us to reevaluate the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages without recourse to environmental or historical determinism. Neat categories, types, and periodizations of traditional historical writing have long understated the complexity of this transformational period. In understanding the processes of land use and settlement patterns beyond simplistic environmental determinism, the perception of landscapes, and the social, religious, and cultural connotations of spaces and places should be added to the complex tapestry of human culture. With this premise, my research attempts to respond to the need for new data and approaches in order to draw a more complete picture of Anatolian rural landscapes.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge T. C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü, which generously granted me research permits. My fieldwork has been financially supported by the following institutions: American Research Institute in Turkey, the Louis J. Kolb Foundation, and the graduate program in the Art and Archaeology of the Mediterranean World at the University of Pennsylvania. I am particularly indebted to İlham Öztürk, the director of the Silifke Museum, for her tremendous support and generosity. I thank the following people for their contribution to the various stages of the fieldwork: Özgür Avcı, Gazi Cücel, Murat Çavdar, Caner Güney, Yaşar Öztürk, Songül Saydam, Bilal Söğüt, Çiğdem Toskay, Özlem Türe, and Ender Varinlioğlu. Finally I would like to express my gratitude to Hugh Elton, Clive Foss, Johannes Koder, Cecil Lee Striker, and Alice-Mary Talbot for their suggestions and advice during the preparation of this article.

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